

[ZELDA: SPIRIT TRACKS](#)

# Zelda Director on Spirit Tracks

Says cel-shading is ideal for the handheld and loves the stylus controls.

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The wait for [The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks](#) is finally over. The title, which earned a 9.3 rating by IGN.com, shipped to retailers across America on Tuesday. To celebrate, we briefly chatted with Shigeru Miyamoto's righthand man and longtime Zelda director [Eiji Aonuma](#), who's helmed just about every major Link adventure in the last decade, from *Majora's Mask* to the aforementioned *Spirit Tracks*. Aonuma talks about the epic handheld title, waxing on about the cel-shaded style and stylus controls, in the quickie interview below.

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## IGN: What do you like best about Spirit Tracks and why?

**Eiji Aonuma:** I like how we have integrated Zelda into the storyline and gameplay. Utilizing her as the Phantom in dungeons really opens up new ways to play, and we're able to take the story in new directions with her involved. This is really the first game in the series that highlights Princess Zelda's personality and characteristics.

## IGN The game looks like Phantom Hourglass, itself inspired by Wind Waker. Is cel-shaded Zelda better suited to DS than a realistic, gritty game like Twilight Princess?

**Eiji Aonuma:** I feel that toon shading is the best way for us to successfully deliver the kind of game we want to make. If we utilized a realistic art style for the graphics, the size of Link and other characters would be too small to be controlled in comparison with the size of locations, buildings and objects on the [Nintendo DS](#). It wouldn't be impossible to do, but it would be far from the ideal experience for the player. Given the control scheme and gameplay we've adopted for *Phantom Hourglass* and *Spirit Tracks*, toon shading is the best fit as the cartoonish art style called "deformation," which changes the proportions between the characters and other objects, can be naturally accepted by the player.

## IGN: What is gained and lost in stylus-based controls, if anything?

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**Eiji Aonuma:** The stylus and touch screen represent the ideal control scheme for the game in my mind. If we took on a more traditional control scheme, we would want to try a behind the player camera view, which would be difficult. I think we've maximized the play experience with touch screen controls to the point where nearly all gameplay elements remain intact and are in some cases enhanced.



SHIGERU MIYAMOTO AND EIJI AONUMA (RIGHT) ACCEPT MORE AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN BEING AWESOME.

**IGN:** Gamers always ask for more difficult experiences. How challenging is Spirit Tracks as opposed to Phantom Hourglass?

**Eiji Aonuma:** I'd describe the experience of Spirit Tracks as different than Phantom Hourglass. We've introduced a few new styles of gameplay, which players will need to approach with different tactics than might have worked consistently in previous games.

One of the new planners for Spirit Tracks is a programmer. He worked on the game's puzzles in the dungeons in the Tower of Spirits that players visit in the second half of the game, so they have a sort of more scientific and calculated approach than if they were created by someone without this kind of experience. Many of us on the development team found these puzzles to be refreshing and quite challenging, so they should offer an original experience to long time Zelda fans and cause them to think in new ways.

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